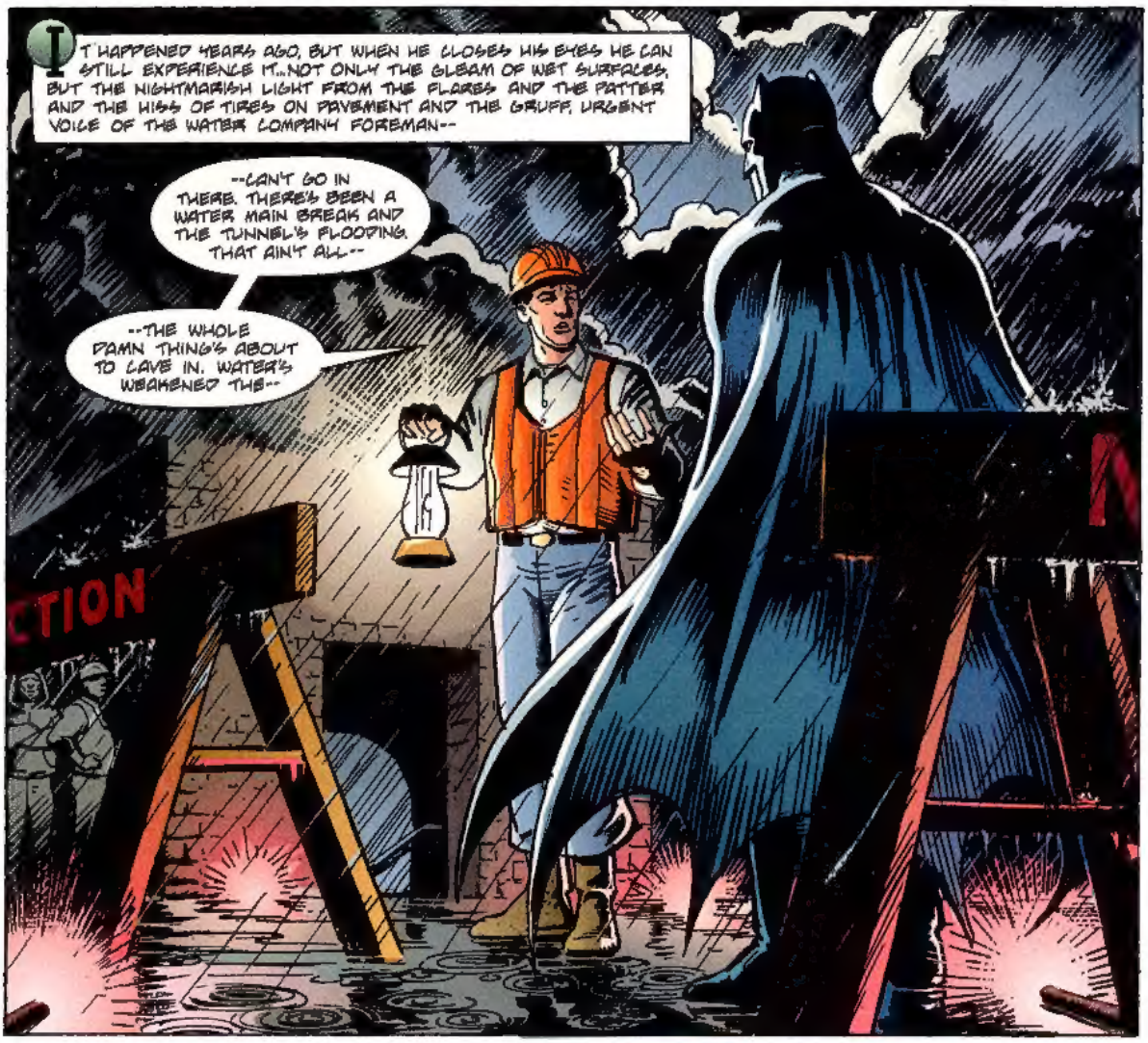
BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 16 MAR 91
1.50 CAN 1.85
VENOM
PART ONE OF FIVE
DENNIS O'NEIL ✦ TREVOR VON EEDEN
RUSSELL BRAUN ✦ JOSÉ LUIS GARCIA-LOPÉZ

CHALLENGERS
of the UNKNOWN
TM
PART TWO OF EIGHT
BY JEPH LOEB AND TIM SALE
JUSTICE
CHALLENGERS ON TRIAL!
ON SALE IN APRIL!

VENOM: PART ONE

Story: Denny O'Neil • Layouts: Trevor Von Eeden •
Pencils: Russell Braun • Inks: Jose Luis Garcia Lopez •
Willie Schubert: Letters • Steve Oliff: Colors • Dooley & Helfer: Editors


IT HAPPENED YEARS AGO, BUT WHEN HE CLOSES HIS EYES HE CAN STILL EXPERIENCE IT...NOT ONLY THE GLEAM OF WET SURFACES, BUT THE NIGHTMARISH LIGHT FROM THE FLARES AND THE PATTER AND THE HISS OF TIRES ON PAVEMENT AND THE GRUFF, URGENT VOICE OF THE WATER COMPANY FOREMAN--
--CAN'T GO IN THERE. THERE'S BEEN A WATER MAIN BREAK AND THE TUNNEL'S FLOODING. THAT AIN'T ALL--
--THE WHOLE DAMN THING'S ABOUT TO CAVE IN. WATER'S WEAKENED THE--

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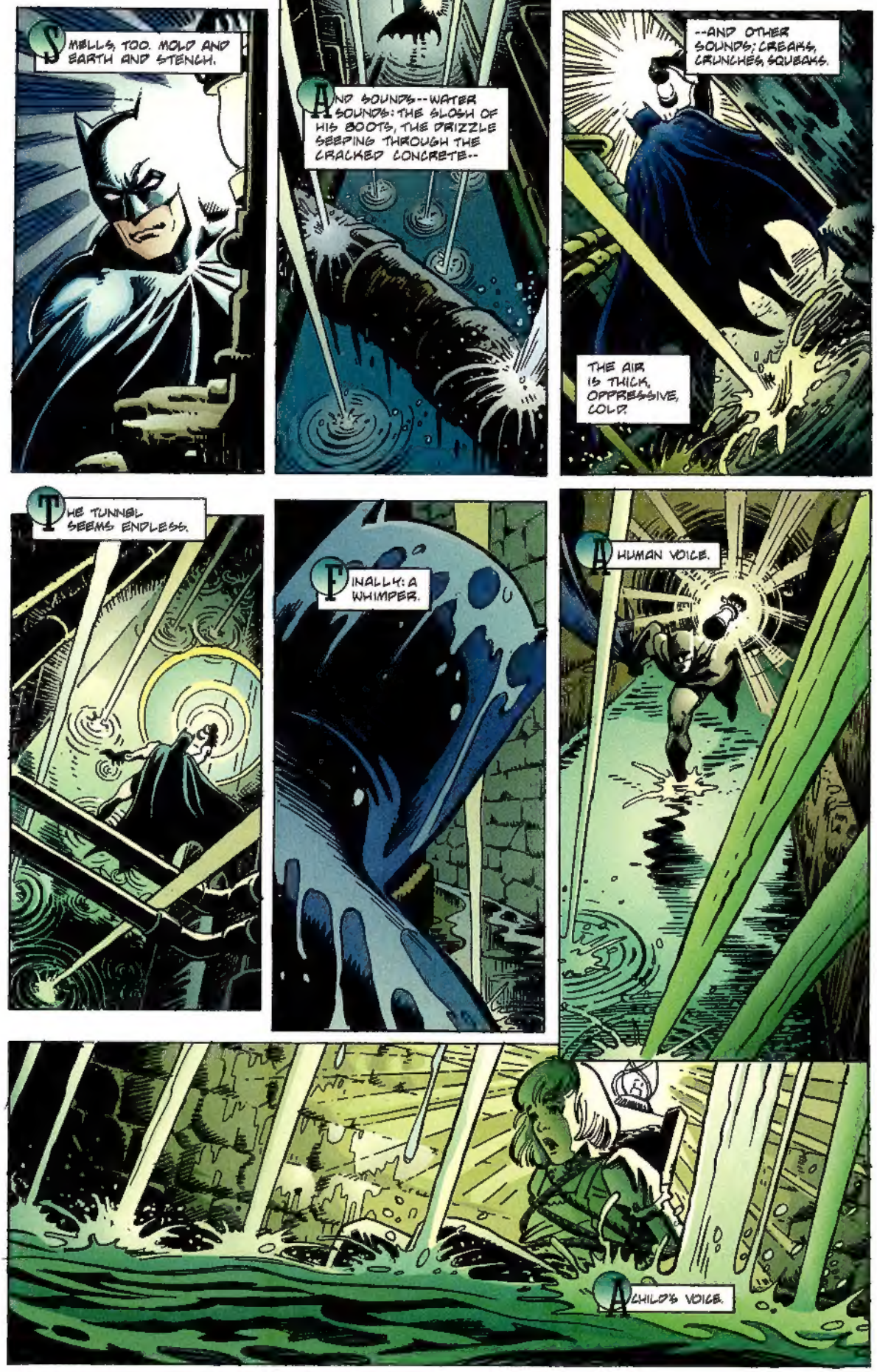
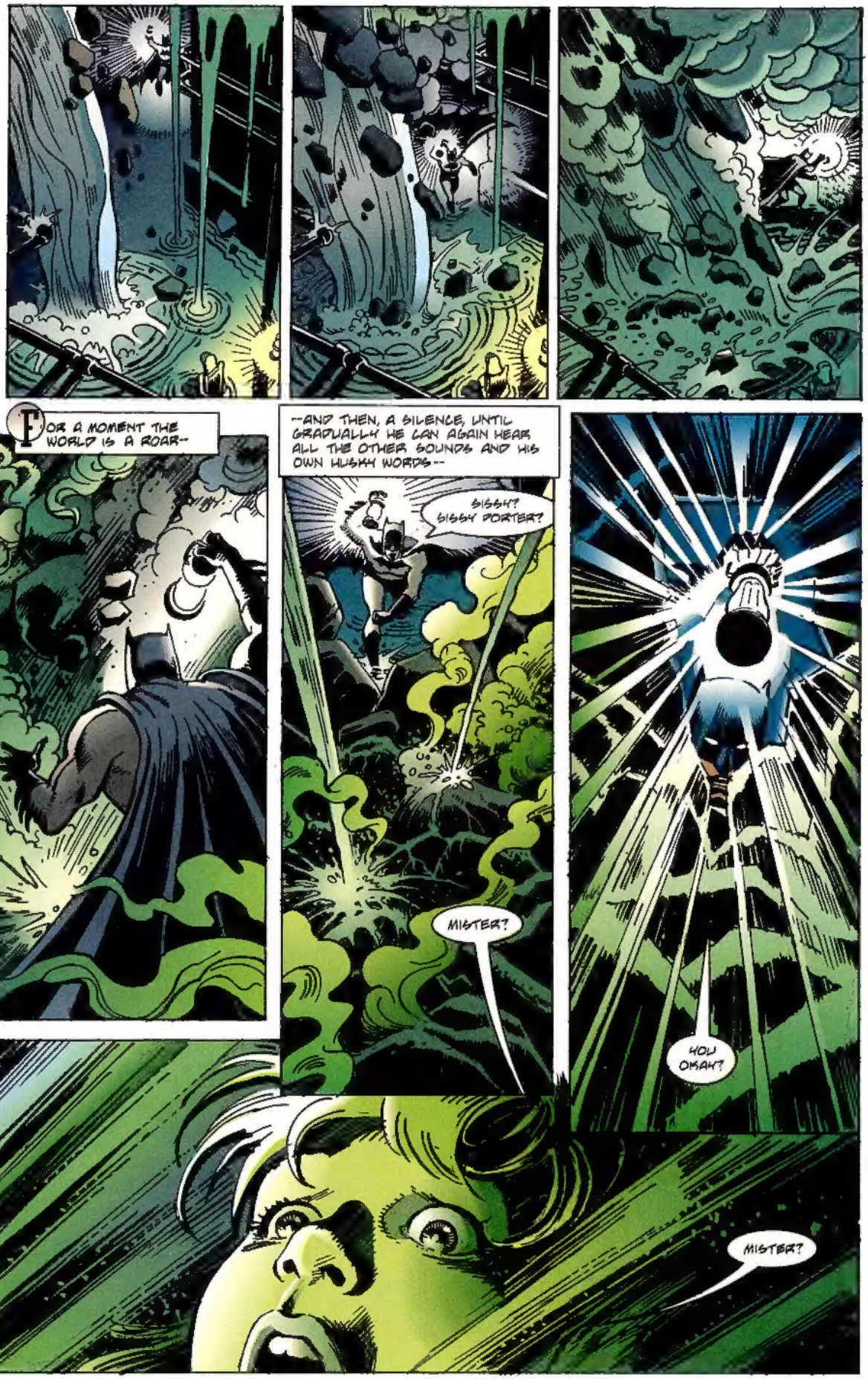
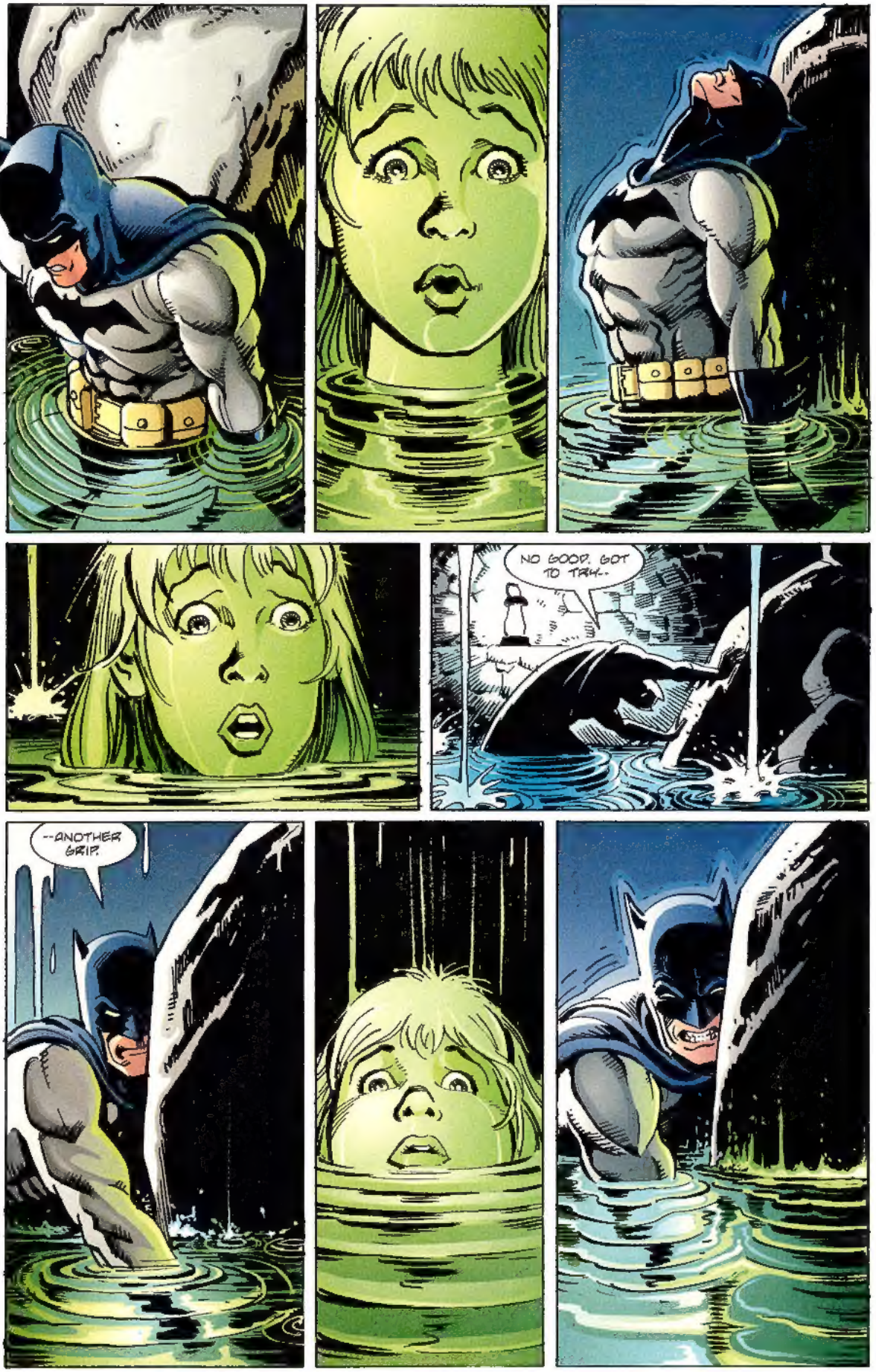
Jnx_Scanz_HaCkA !!!


SMELLS, TOO. MOLD AND EARTH AND STENCH.
AND SOUNDS--WATER SOUNDS: THE SLOSH OF HIS BOOTS, THE DRIZZLE SEEPING THROUGH THE CRACKED CONCRETE--
--AND OTHER SOUNDS; CREAKS, CRUNCHES, SQUEAKS.
THE AIR IS THICK, OPPRESSIVE, COLD.
THE TUNNEL SEEMS ENDLESS.
FINALLY: A WHIMPER.
A HUMAN VOICE.
A CHILD'S VOICE.


FOR A MOMENT THE WORLD IS A ROAR--
--AND THEN, A SILENCE, UNTIL GRADUALLY HE CAN AGAIN HEAR ALL THE OTHER SOUNDS AND HIS OWN HUSKY WORDS--
SISSY? SISSY PORTER?
MISTER?
YOU OKAY?
MISTER?

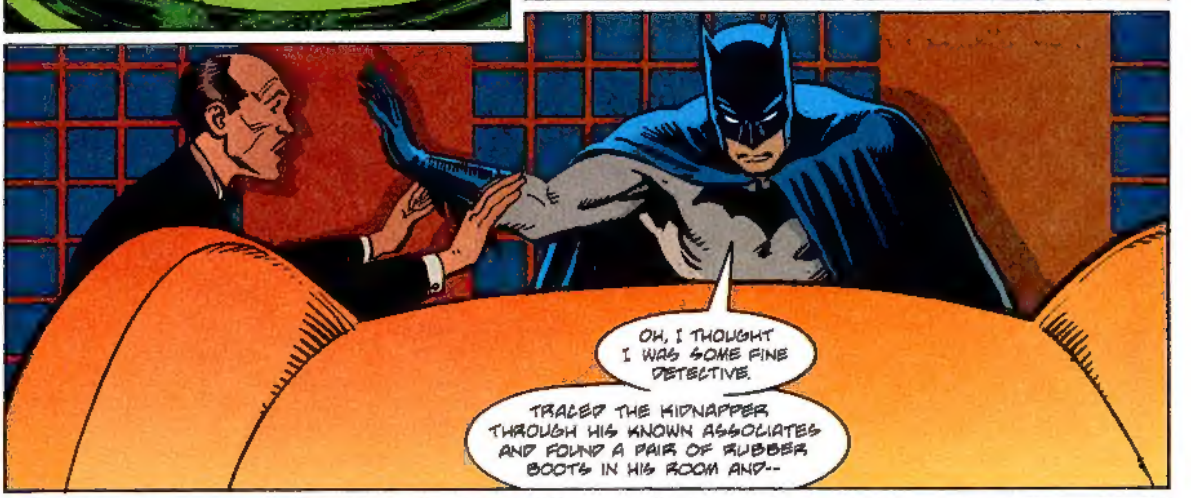
I'LL HAVE YOU OUT IN A MINUTE.
GIVE YOU MY WORD ON THAT.
MY PROMISE.
NEVER BREAK--
--A PROMISE.
ONE MORE PIECE.

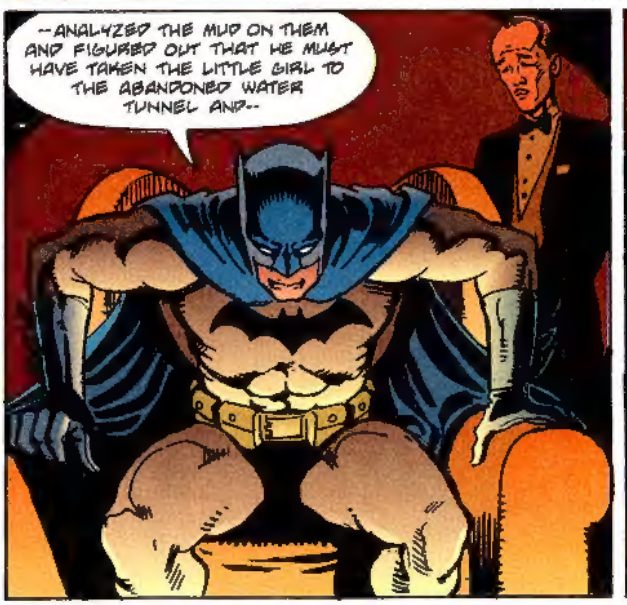

NO GOOD. GOT TO TRY--
--ANOTHER GRIP.

NO GOOD. GOT TO GET UNDER--
GIGGLE?

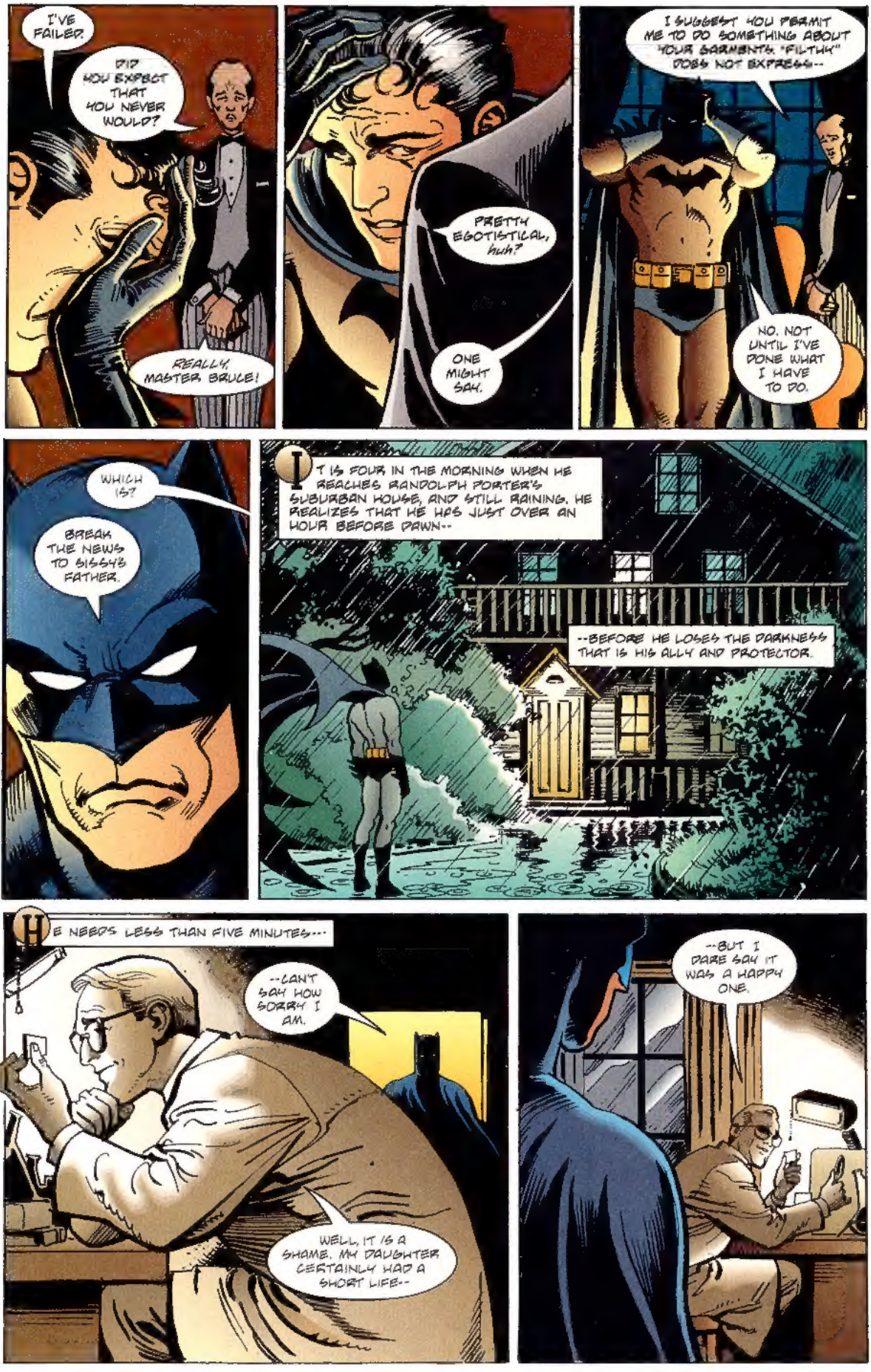
SHE DIED.

I WAS TOO WEAK TO SAVE HER.
MASTER BRUCE--


OH, I THOUGHT I WAS SOME FINE DETECTIVE.
TRACED THE KIDNAPPER THROUGH HIS KNOWN ASSOCIATES AND FOUND A PAIR OF RUBBER BOOTS IN HIS ROOM AND--


--ANALYZED THE MUD ON THEM AND FIGURED OUT THAT HE MUST HAVE TAKEN THE LITTLE GIRL TO THE ABANDONED WATER TUNNEL AND--

--I WAS RIGHT.
BUT I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH.


I'VE FAILED.
DID YOU EXPECT THAT YOU NEVER WOULD?
REALLY, MASTER BRUCE!
PRETTY EGOTISTICAL, HUH?
ONE MIGHT SAY.
I SUGGEST YOU PERMIT ME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR GARMENTS. "FILTHY" DOES NOT EXPRESS--
NO. NOT UNTIL I'VE DONE WHAT I HAVE TO DO.
WHICH IS?
BREAK THE NEWS TO SISSY'S FATHER.
IT IS FOUR IN THE MORNING WHEN HE REACHES RANDOLPH PORTER'S SUBURBAN HOUSE, AND STILL RAINING. HE REALIZES THAT HE HAS JUST OVER AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN--
--BEFORE HE LOSES THE DARKNESS THAT IS HIS ALLY AND PROTECTOR.
HE NEEDS LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES...
--CAN'T SAY HOW SORRY I AM.
WELL, IT IS A SHAME. MY DAUGHTER CERTAINLY HAD A SHORT LIFE--
--BUT I DARE SAY IT WAS A HAPPY ONE.

JUST IMAGINE!

THE MIGHTIEST HEROES OF THEIR TIME...

STARMAN!
BLACK CANARY!
FLASH!
GREEN LANTERN!
HAWKMAN!

...HAVE BANDED TOGETHER AS THE

JUSTICE SOCIETY of America

TO STAMP OUT THE FORCES OF EVIL WHEREVER AND WHENEVER THEY APPEAR!

THE THRILLING EXPLOITS OF THESE FAMOUS CHAMPIONS APPEAR IN THE *NEW*

WRITTEN BY LEN STRAZEWSKI
DRAWN BY RICK BURCHETT, GRANT MIEHM, MIKE PAROBECK & TOM ARTIS

MINI-SERIES *ON SALE IN EARLY 1991!*

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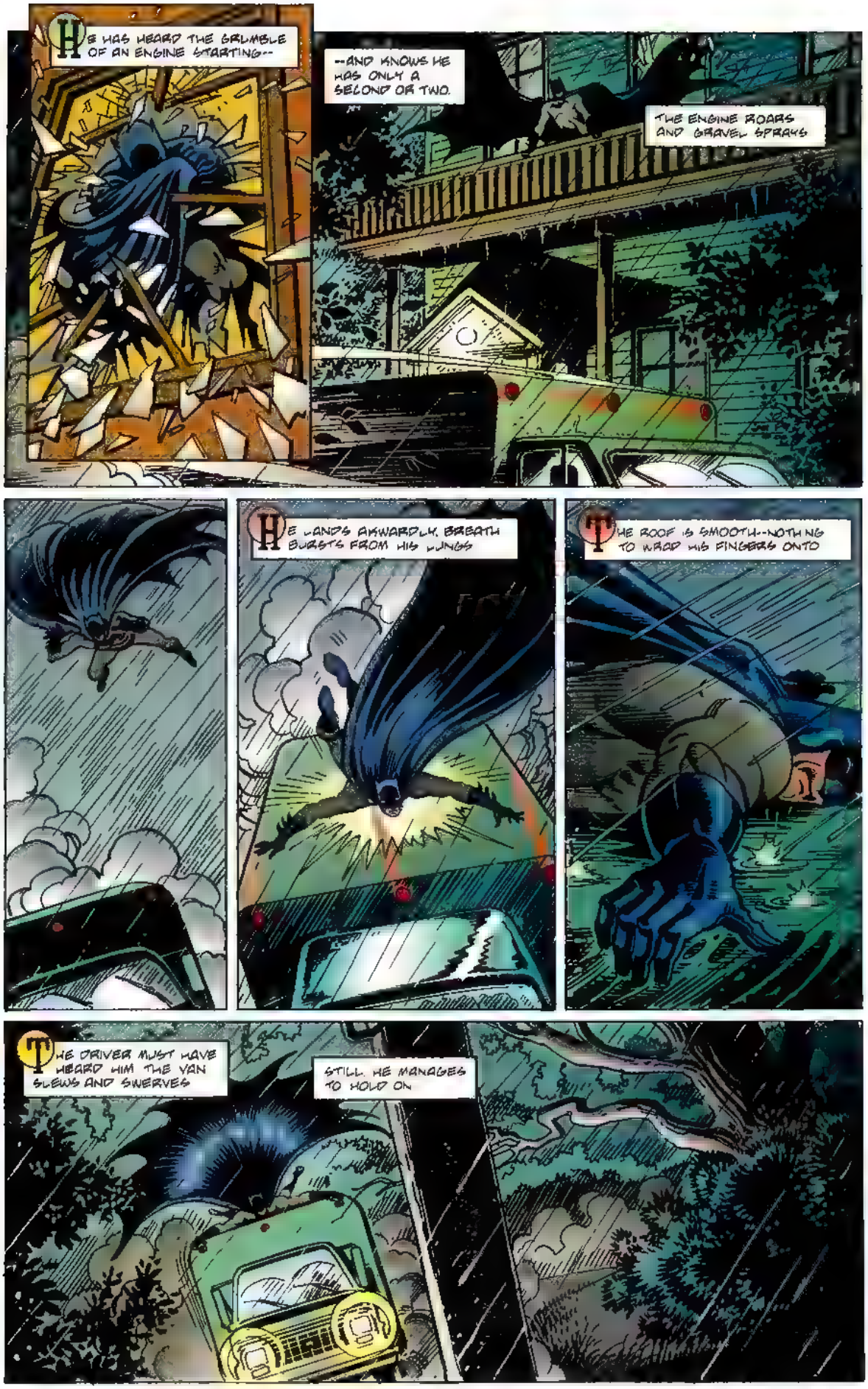
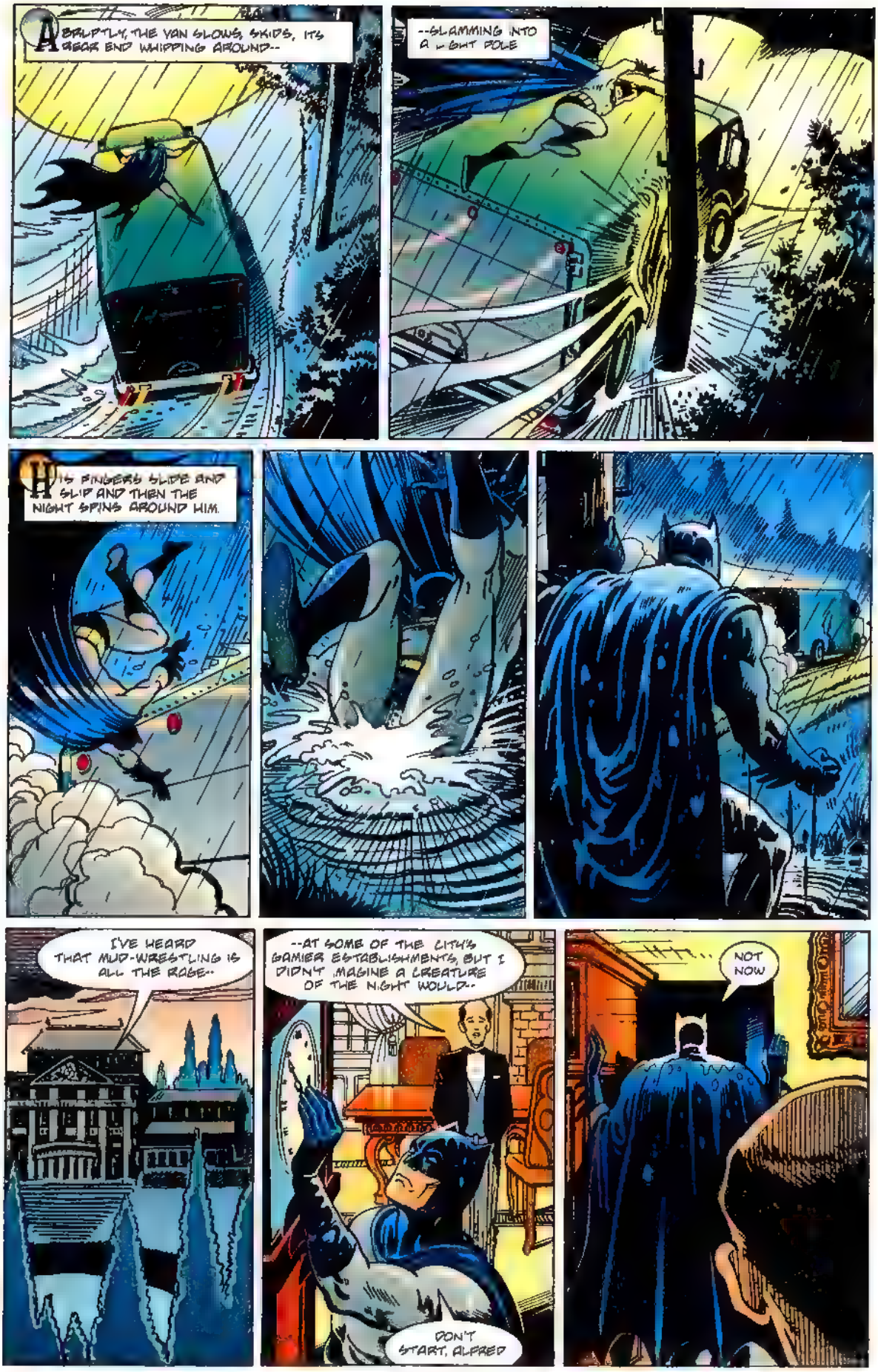
SHE DIED ALONE--
--IN TERROR AND PAIN.
WHO KNOWS WHAT AWFUL THINGS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HER IF SHE'D LIVED, EH?
YES WHO KNOWS
SOMETHING BOTHERS ME YOU SAID THE KIDNAPPER DIDN'T WANT MONEY.
WHAT WAS HE ASKING FOR?
THESE A HANDFUL OF CAPSULES
WHAT ARE THEY?
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE TERM 'DESIGNER DRUGS'? PROBABLY NOT EH?
AND I DOUBT YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
TRY ME.
BASICALLY WHAT I DO IS ALTER THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF CERTAIN CHEMICALS TO OBTAIN RESULTS NOT FOUND IN NATURE
CUSTOM-MAKE THEM, AS IT WERE, TO ENHANCE HUMAN POTENTIAL

THE SAME KIND OF EXPERIMENTS THAT COPLEY IS DOING AT MISSOUR TECH, DEVEREAUX IN PARIS SOLEVSKY IN MOSCOW--
FAMILIAR WITH THE WORK, EH?
YES, I'M IN THE SAME BALL PARK AS THE GENTLEMEN YOU MENTIONED
BUT THEY'RE SATISFIED WITH BUNTS. I'M GOING FOR A FOUR-BAGGER.
IN FACT JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'VE ALREADY CROSSED HOME PLATE
THESE BABIES RIGHT HERE. IF YOU'D HAD THEM TONIGHT AT THAT TUNNEL, SISSY WOULD STILL BE ALIVE
GO ON. TAKE ONE.
FOR ALMOST A FULL MINUTE, HE GAZES AT IT--
NOT INTERESTED!
ONE MORE QUESTION... DID YOU GIVE IN TO THE KIDNAPPER'S DEMAND?
HAND OVER FIVE YEARS' WORK JUST LIKE THAT? NO THANK YOU!
IS THERE ANYONE ELSE IN THE HOUSE?
NO, I LIVE ALONE SINCE MY WIFE DIED--
ARE YOU EXPECTING ANYONE?
AT THIS HOUR?
INTO THE NEXT ROOM
SOMEONE'S COMING UP THE BACK STAIRS.

A MOMENT LATER COMES THE MUTED STUTTER OF A MACHINE PISTOL, AND A BURST OF NINE MILLIMETER SLUGS SPLINTERS THE DOORS.
OWWWW
WHAT IN BLUE BLAZES--?
ONE OF THE KIDNAPPERS CALL THE COPS
I'M GOING AFTER HIS PARTNER


HE HAS HEARD THE GRUMBLE OF AN ENGINE STARTING--
--AND KNOWS HE HAS ONLY A SECOND OR TWO.
THE ENGINE ROARS AND GRAVEL SPRAYS
HE LANDS AKWARDLY. BREATH BURSTS FROM HIS LUNGS
THE ROOF IS SMOOTH--NOTHING TO WRAP HIS FINGERS ONTO
THE DRIVER MUST HAVE HEARD HIM THE VAN SLEWS AND SWERVES
STILL. HE MANAGES TO HOLD ON

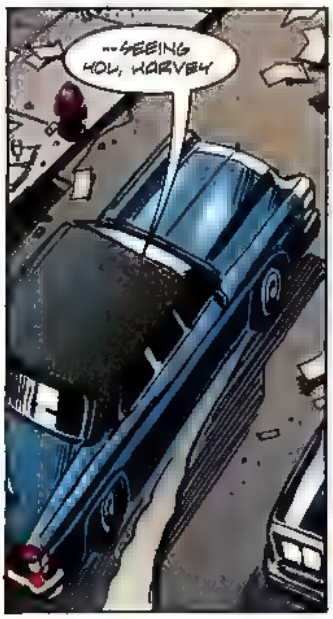

ABRUPTLY, THE VAN SLOWS, SKIDS, ITS REAR END WHIPPING AROUND--
--SLAMMING INTO A LIGHT POLE
HIS FINGERS SLIDE AND SLIP AND THEN THE NIGHT SPINS AROUND HIM.
I'VE HEARD THAT MUD-WRESTLING IS ALL THE RAGE..
--AT SOME OF THE CITY'S GAMIER ESTABLISHMENTS, BUT I DIDN'T IMAGINE A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT WOULD--
DON'T START, ALFRED
NOT NOW

HE'S TORTURING HIMSELF... SETTING THE CLOCK TO THE EXACT MINUTE HIS PARENTS DIED..
DARE I ASK?
WORKED IT OUT...ON A SLIP STICH...THE CHUNK OF CEMENT I--
--COULDN'T...MOVE WEIGHED--
--SIX HUNDRED THIR--
--TY POUNDS... WEIGHT I'VE GOT ON THIS--
--BAR NOW--
Aagh

BAM!
DELTOID MUSCLE IS BEGINNING TO SWELL. UGH. PROBABLY, AND I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THE CARTILAGE WERE DAMAGED--
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO CONSULT A PHYSICIAN--
LATER, MAYBE
GET THE CAR
--IS THE PLACE ALARMED
MAN I ASK WHAT WE SEEK?
THE GETAWAY VAN LOOKED LIKE IT HAD RECENTLY BEEN REPAINTED--
--AND IT HIT THIS POLE. MAYBE IT LEFT TRACES--
YES, HERE THEY ARE. NOT MUCH, BUT ENOUGH
"NEXT WE HAVE A MICROSCOPIC LOOK TO LEARN EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF PAINT WE'RE DEALING WITH
"WE MAKE A FEW CALLS TO LEARN WHICH BODY SHOPS IN GOTHAM USE IT."

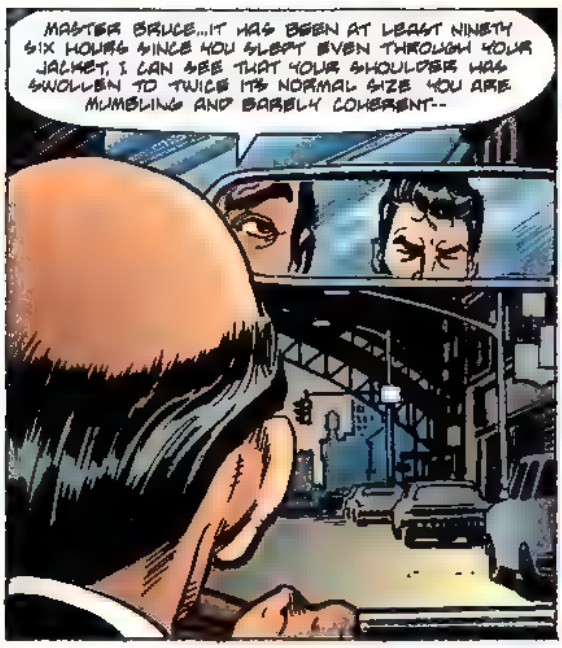
"--AND THEN WE VISIT THE LIKELY ONES WE MAKE A DONATION TO THE OWNER'S FAVORITE CHARITIES--

"--AND THEY VERY GENEROUSLY PERMIT US TO EXAMINE THEIR RECORDS."

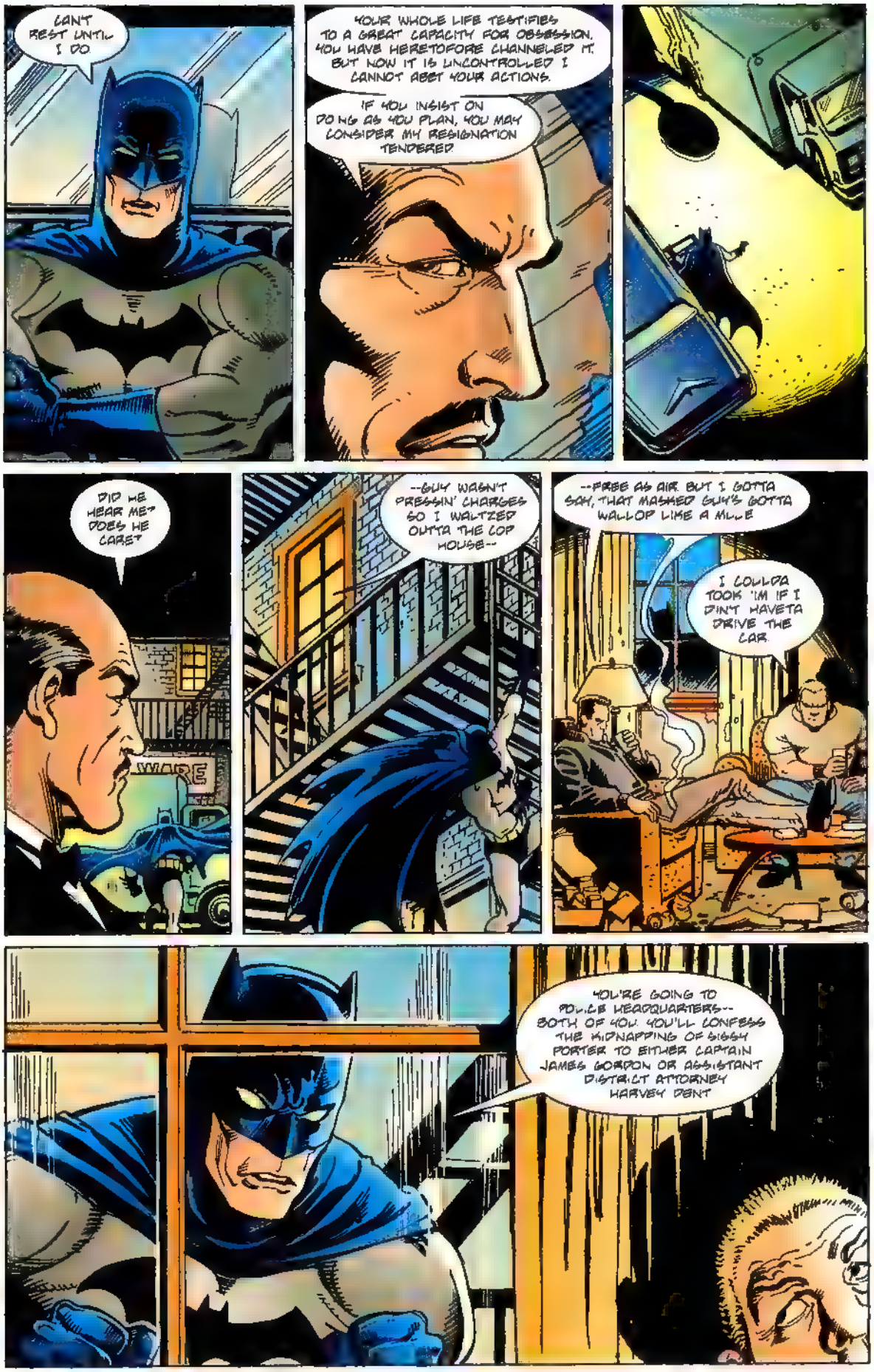


HARVEY DENT--THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY..THE ONE I--BATMAN--HAVE A WORKING ARRANGEMENT WITH...
I AM FAMILIAR WITH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MISTER DENT
'COURSE YOU ARE. 'COURSE YOU ARE..WHERE WAS I?

OH, YEAH. DENT SAYS THAT ONE OF THE NAMES I GOT FROM THE BODY SHOP..THIS GUY HAS A RECORD..INCLUDES SUSPICION OF KIDNAPPING..WE'RE GONNA SEE HIM.


MASTER BRUCE..IT HAS BEEN AT LEAST NINETY SIX HOURS SINCE YOU SLEPT EVEN THROUGH YOUR JACKET, I CAN SEE THAT YOUR SHOULDER HAS SWOLLEN TO TWICE ITS NORMAL SIZE YOU ARE MUMBLING AND BARELY COHERENT--

--I REALLY MUST INSIST THAT YOU SEE A DOCTOR AND THEN RETIRE--
NO!
I COULDN'T SAVE THE GIRL... COULDN'T SAVE LITTLE SISSY PORTER.. WATCHED SISSY PORTER DIE..BUT I CAN GET THE SCUM WHO KILLED HER.


CAN'T REST UNTIL I DO
YOUR WHOLE LIFE TESTIFIES TO A GREAT CAPACITY FOR OBSESSION. YOU HAVE HERETOFORE CHANNELED IT. BUT NOW IT IS UNCONTROLLED I CANNOT ABET YOUR ACTIONS.
IF YOU INSIST ON DOING AS YOU PLAN, YOU MAY CONSIDER MY RESIGNATION TENDERED
DID HE HEAR ME? DOES HE CARE?
--GUY WASN'T PRESSIN' CHARGES SO I WALTZED OUTTA THE COP HOUSE--
--FREE AS AIR. BUT I GOTTA SAY, THAT MASKED GUY'S GOTTA WALLOP LIKE A MULE
I COULDA TOOK 'IM IF I DIN'T HAVETA DRIVE THE CAR.
YOU'RE GOING TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS-- BOTH OF YOU. YOU'LL CONFESS THE KIDNAPPING OF SIGGY PORTER TO EITHER CAPTAIN JAMES GORDON OR ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY HARVEY DENT

DOING TIME
AND
FIGHTING CRIME
EMERALD DAWN II
CONTINUING THE TALE OF
GREEN LANTERN'S ORIGIN
RE-UNITING THE CREATIVE
TEAM OF THE ORIGINAL SERIES
GIFFEN•JONES•BRIGHT•TANGHAL
SIX ISSUES
BEGINNING IN MARCH
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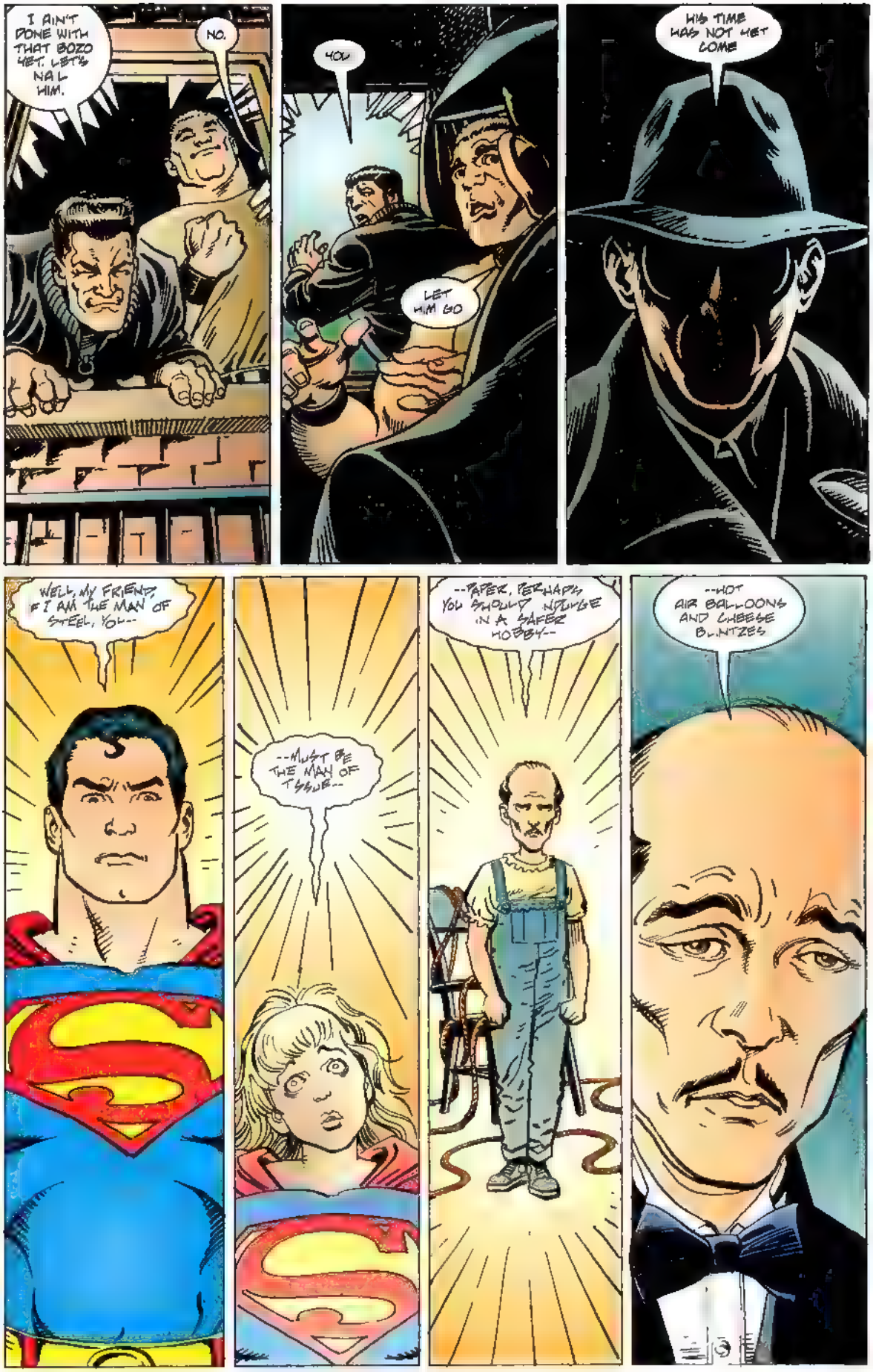
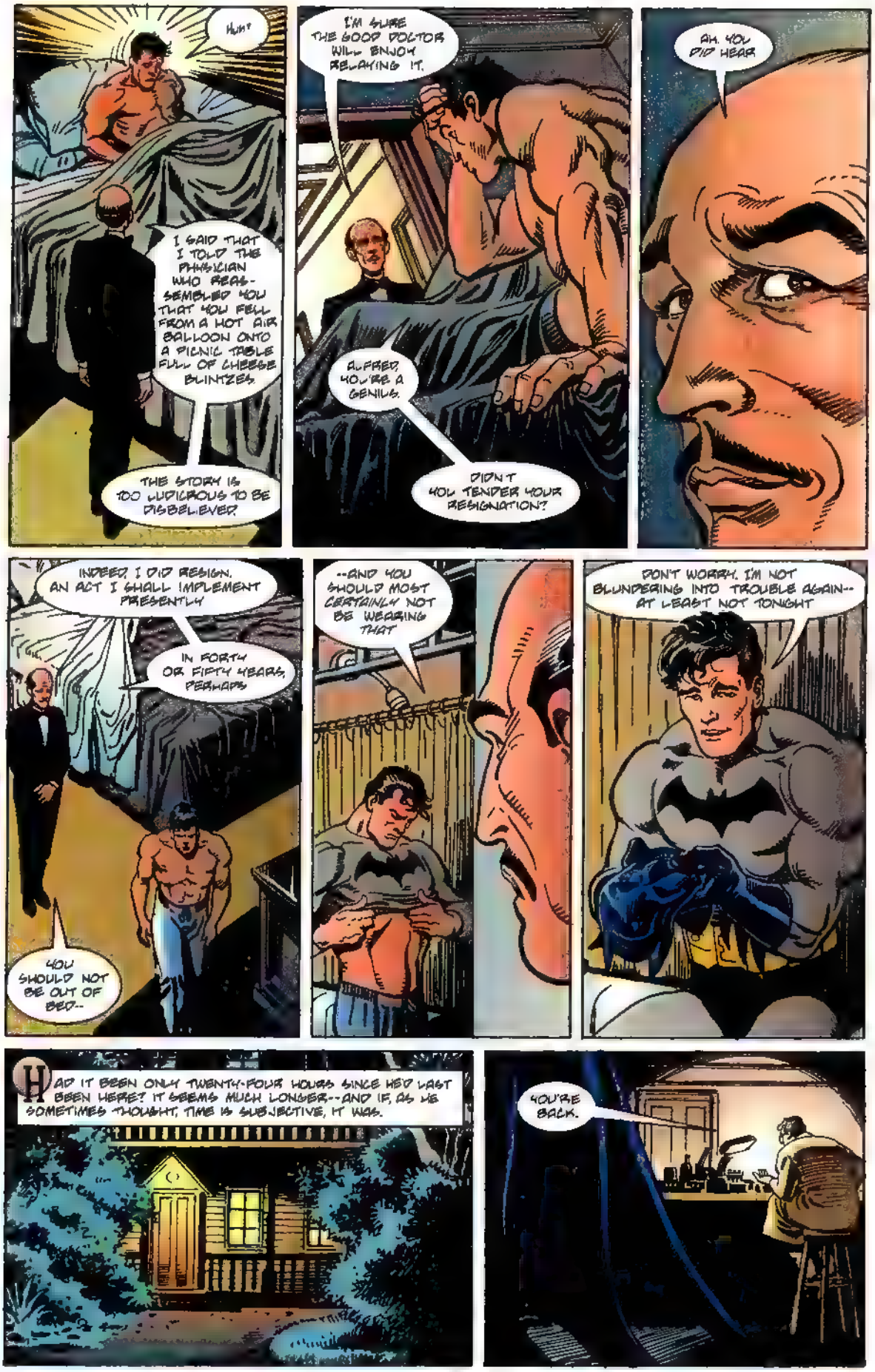
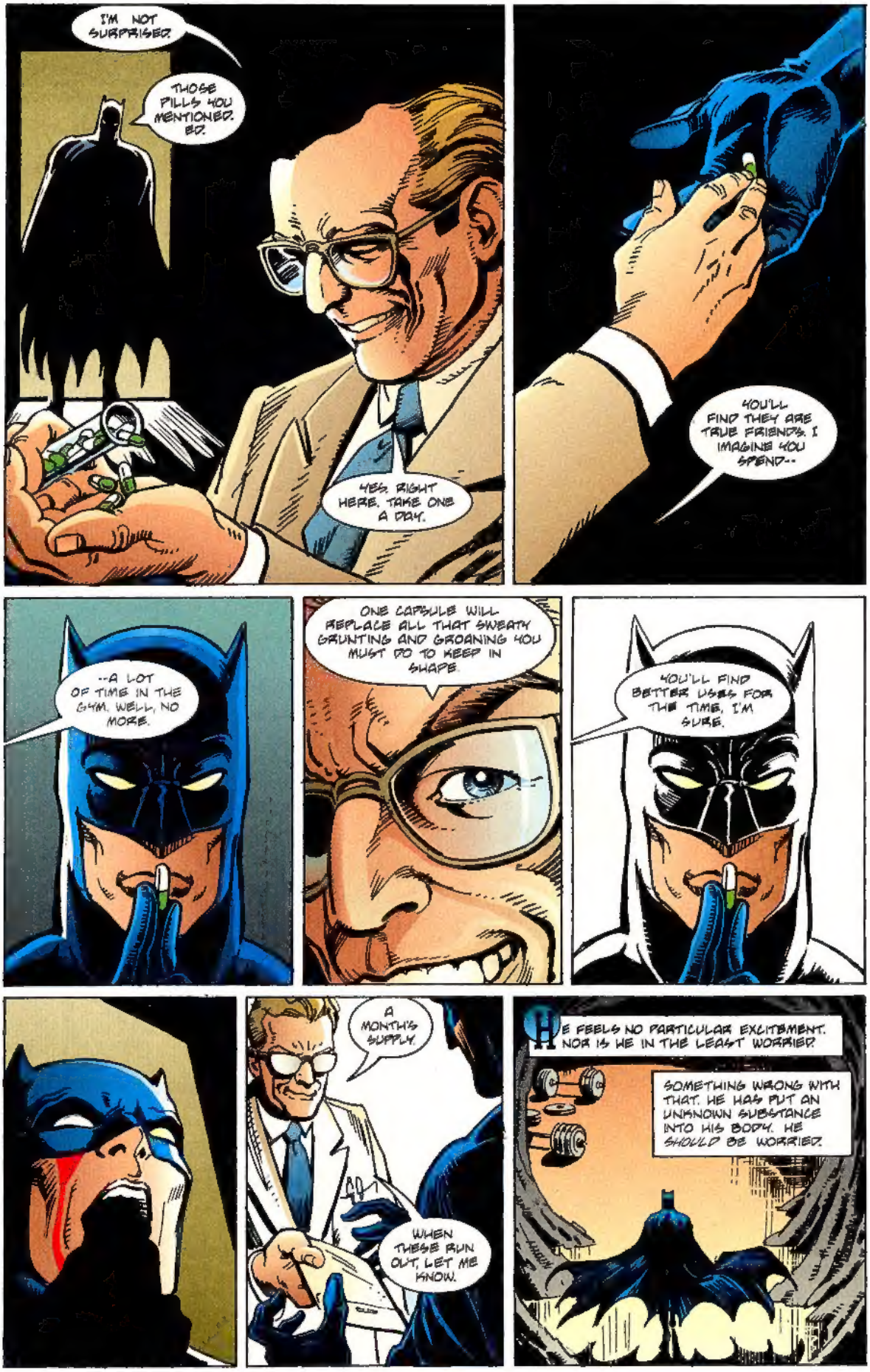
OR BOTH. PREFERABLY BOTH
I C'N TAKE 'IM.
HEH, MAN, I GOT NO BEEF WITH YOU.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY
I'M TELL'N YO, PATSY, HE CAN HIT!
I C'N TAKE 'IM
UHHH
WHUHF

BAMBAM!!
BEST I TOLD YOU HE WASN'T SO TOUGH.
"YOU HOLDIN' HIM, PATSY? REAL TIGHT? LIKE HE CAN'T GET LOOSE"
"BAM"

Ow!
He knows his only chance is not to resist--
--to ride the force of the blow--
Then training
Then instinct
Then nothing.


I AIN'T DONE WITH THAT BOZO YET. LET'S NAIL HIM.
NO.
YOU
LET HIM GO
HIS TIME HAS NOT YET COME
WELL, MY FRIEND, I AM THE MAN OF STEEL, YOU--
--MUST BE THE MAN OF TISSUE--
--PAPER, PERHAPS YOU SHOULD INDULGE IN A SAFER HOBBY--
--HOT AIR BALLOONS AND CHEESE BLINTZES


HUH?
I SAID THAT I TOLD THE PHYSICIAN WHO REASSEMBLED YOU THAT YOU FELL FROM A HOT AIR BALLOON ONTO A PICNIC TABLE FULL OF CHEESE BLINTZES.
THE STORY IS TOO LUDICROUS TO BE DISBELIEVED.
I'M SURE THE GOOD DOCTOR WILL ENJOY RELAYING IT.
ALFRED, YOU'RE A GENIUS.
DIDN'T YOU TENDER YOUR RESIGNATION?
AH, YOU DID HEAR
INDEED, I DID RESIGN. AN ACT I SHALL IMPLEMENT PRESENTLY
IN FORTY OR FIFTY YEARS, PERHAPS
YOU SHOULD NOT BE OUT OF BED--
--AND YOU SHOULD MOST CERTAINLY NOT BE WEARING THAT
DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT BLUNDERING INTO TROUBLE AGAIN-- AT LEAST NOT TONIGHT
HAD IT BEEN ONLY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS SINCE HE'D LAST BEEN HERE? IT SEEMS MUCH LONGER--AND IF, AS HE SOMETIMES THOUGHT, TIME IS SUBJECTIVE, IT WAS.
YOU'RE BACK.


I'M NOT SURPRISED.
THOSE PILLS YOU MENTIONED. ED.
YES. RIGHT HERE. TAKE ONE A DAY.
YOU'LL FIND THEY ARE TRUE FRIENDS. I IMAGINE YOU SPEND--
--A LOT OF TIME IN THE GYM. WELL, NO MORE.
ONE CAPSULE WILL REPLACE ALL THAT SWEATY GRUNTING AND GROANING YOU MUST DO TO KEEP IN SHAPE.
YOU'LL FIND BETTER USES FOR THE TIME, I'M SURE.
A MONTH'S SUPPLY.
WHEN THESE RUN OUT, LET ME KNOW.
HE FEELS NO PARTICULAR EXCITEMENT. NOR IS HE IN THE LEAST WORRIED.
SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT. HE HAS PUT AN UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE INTO HIS BODY. HE SHOULD BE WORRIED.

GOOD. NOW FOR JUST A BIT OF SIMPLE INVESTIGATION--
BA
YOU WEREN'T--
Huh?
Waughhf!
--HARD TO FIND.
YOUR TURN.

I C'N TAKE YOU.
BAK
BAK
IT BEGINS AT THE BASE OF HIS SPINE--
--RISES THROUGH HIS CHEST AND LUNGS--
--AND THEN HE CAN CONTAIN IT NO LONGER--
HAHAHAH

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT®

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Dear Andrew and Kevin:

It is an unfortunate fact that the comics writer is often the overlooked talent in producing a memorable story at the hands of the artist. It is highly probable, for example, that many readers were attracted to LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #11, the start of the "Prey" storyline, by the promise of seeing The Batman rendered by fan favorite and critically-acclaimed artist Paul Gulacy. While I was most certainly looking forward to seeing Gulacy's version of Batman once again, in all honesty it was the promise of reading a Doug Moench Batman story again that drew me to "Prey." Whether he was penning a one-issue story or one chapter in a multi-parter, for a few years in the mid-80s Doug Moench wrote excellent Batman story after excellent Batman story. The characterizations were always first-rate and the pacing always perfect.

In Part One of "Prey" the Moench excitement returns. After two LoDK storylines and several in the other Bat-titles involving the supernatural, I am glad to finally see a storyline that seems, at least at this point, to shift away from that particular emphasis. Not that I mind seeing Batman in supernatural settings fighting arcane menaces, but what made such Batman stories of the past as "Red Water, Crimson Death" classics was that they were the exceptions, rather than the rule of Batman stories, genre-wise, at the time.

So here we have a Batman story featuring Hugo Strange, a villain heretofore not yet "redefined" since Batman's Miller Time, and one Moench handled well in the past. The whole concept of Hugo Strange's picking The Batman apart psychologically is intriguing, fresh, and contemporary. While Batman's reactions to the telecast in this story may be as controversial among fans as his somewhat breakdown at the hands of The Joker in the ASYLUM graphic novel, I found Moench's reasoning to be completely believable and adding to, rather than contradicting, the Batman mythos. Hugo Strange's ramblings to himself and to his lover, and his assuming a Batman costume at the end, are wonderful foreshadowings of the "later" Hugo Strange stories written by Steve Englehart and by Moench himself. Many readers are criticizing the first issue of your competitor's, uh, "Legends of the Arachknight" title for having a 24-page prologue as an excuse for the first issue of a five-part story. Moench, by contrast, gives us a well-structured first chapter, with the brief glimpse of Catwoman, for example, whetting our appetites for her next appearance in the story, and the characters and plot both being not only set up but also set in motion in this chapter.

I'm not going to neglect to mention Gulacy's art. I was actually introduced to Paul Gulacy the last time he drew a Batman story, which was toward the end of the aforementioned Moench run on the book, in 1985. Terry Austin's inks, which I am after many years convinced cannot make any penciller look less than wonderful, beautifully finish the detailed pencil style of Gulacy's. As well as the intricate linework Gulacy draws here as on all of his assignments, he also has a terrific sense of storytelling and layouts, particularly evidenced here for me in the fifth panel of page 8, during the aforementioned "telecast" sequence. Take it from me, gentlemen: what we have here is a moment that will go down in Batman history as one of the most poignant and most chilling.

Thus far, "Prey" has engaged me artistically and intellectually more than either of the two previous storylines. And, with Moench and Gulacy at the helm, I have no doubts that it will continue for four more issues.

Frank Balkin
(address withheld)

COVER: José Luis Garcia-Lopéz. Color by Steve Oliff.

NEXT ISSUE: Now it's a part of him. Eating from within. He turns on the only one who can help him. He becomes what he has sworn to destroy. Continuing this dark, controversial Batman story, "Venom" Part Two by Denny O'Neil, Trevor Von Eeden, Russell Braun, and José Luis Garcia-Lopéz.

—Kevin Dooley

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